OPENING STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE VERNON J. EHLERS
RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

"National Science Foundation Reauthorization, Part II"

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I am pleased to participate in the Research and Science Education Subcommittee's second hearing addressing the reauthorization of the National Science Foundation. Today our witnesses represent the diversity of constituencies who work with the NSF, showing the broad impact of this agency.

Pervasive across the witnesses' prepared testimony is recognition of the need to further define the educational role of NSF. Everyone here today knows that the Education and Human Resources Directorate has suffered funding stagnation and cuts, even while the research budget of NSF is considered a national priority for U.S. competitiveness and innovation and subsequently increased. It is clear to me you cannot separate the research and education mission of NSF, and I would like to explore ways to ensure that we reverse such a discouraging trend.

Related to education, I am also pleased that the role of NSF in undergraduate education is receiving special attention in this hearing. An institution in my own district, Calvin College, has taken steps to help their student researchers appreciate the impact of NSF on their work. By requiring all equipment obtained with the help of NSF to include a small label stating, "NSF supported the purchase of this equipment," students become acquainted with a sometimes invisible benefactor. I applaud Calvin for such a small – but significant – step in communicating the critical support NSF supplies to primarily undergraduate institutions. That said, grants made to undergraduate institutions have been stretched especially thin in recent years due to the inadequate funding in this area. I know this Committee is considering healthy levels of authorization for undergraduate education, and I will definitely work to see those levels achieved through appropriations.

Another issue before the Committee within reauthorization is how to encourage NSF to capture more researchers at the early stages of their careers. Our panel today includes Professor Meriles, a physicist from the City College of New York. He represents in many ways both the challenges and successes of young investigators today, and I am very interested in learning about his experiences as one of the few selected recipients of NSF's Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) grants. Finding ways to reward creative thinking characteristic of young researchers is critical to ensure that NSF continues to produce the many unanticipated applications of fundamental research.

I thank our witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony.